Student Retention and Transition Series

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL PROGRAM INNOVATIONS AND STUDENT RETENTION RATES: 1920s–1970s

A Report to the *Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and the Issue of Dropouts*

ROBERT M. STAMP

This research project was funded under contract by the Ministry of Education, Ontario.
It reflects the views of the author and not necessarily those of the Ministry.

Chris Ward, Minister
Bernard J. Shapiro, Deputy Minister

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Table of Contents	iii
Abstract	iv
Introduction	1
Part I: The Decade of the 1920s	4
Part II: The Decade of the 1930s	24
Part III: The Decade of the 1940s	40
Part IV: The Decade of the 1950s	53
Part V: The Decade of the 1960s	67
Part VI: The Decade of the 1970s	80
Conclusions	90
References	96
Bibliography	101

ABSTRACT

The half century between the early 1920s and the early 1970s witnessed increases in high school retention rates within Ontario's publicly-supported education system. These increases are attributed both to program changes within the system and to societal factors external to that system.

Retention rates increased slowly during the 1920s, as minor changes in the Ontario secondary school curriculum at the beginning of the decade had minimum impact.

During the 1930s, retention rates fell during the beginning of the decade, then increased at the end -- an increase attributed more to the economic depression of the period than to changes in the secondary school program.

Again during the 1940s, retention rates fell during the first half of the decade -- a result of armed forces enlistment and war-generated industrial work -- and increased during the second half. Increased retention rates in the late 1940s are attributed to improved high school facilities in rural Ontario and to rising educational expectations in the post-war world.

Retention rates showed steady increases during the 1950s -- a decade of minimum program changes in the high schools; these increases are attributed to rising societal and economic expectations.

Steady increases in retention rates were again recorded in the 1960s; these increases are attributed to high school program changes brought about by the federal government's Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act and the provincial Department of Education's Reorganized Program of Studies.

Steady increases in high school retention rates continued through the early 1970s; these increases are attributed to the introduction of the "credit" system, the spread of French-language secondary schools, and further improvements in rural education.

During the 1920s, retention rates were higher for boys than for girls; this is attributed to male-oriented school programs, traditional societal expectations, and job availability. While boys continued to show higher retention rates than girls during the first half of the 1930s, girls did much better during the second half. Shifts are again evident during the 1940s, with girls showing higher retention rates than boys during the first half of the decade -- the war being the major factor -- and boys doing better during the second half. Through the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, average retention rates were similar for male and female pupils.

During the 1920s, retention rates were higher in urban academic schools (collegiate institutes and high schools) than in rural academic schools (continuation schools); this is attributed to superior facilities within urban schools, and to differences

in community acceptance of secondary education. Rural schools showed some superiority during the first half of the 1930s, then slipped behind again in the second half. With the disappearance of continuation schools in the 1940s and 1950s, urban-rural comparisons became more difficult to draw.

During the 1920s, retention rates were much higher in academic programs than in vocational programs; this is attributed to the newness of vocational education and to job availability for vocational program drop-outs. During the 1930s, with jobs less available, the gap in retention rates narrowed somewhat, a process that continued through the 1940s. By the late 1950s, retention rates were higher in vocational programs than in academic programs; this is attributed to a more rigorous selection of students for vocational programs caused by a shortage of student places in those programs. The 1960s saw traditional patterns reassert themselves, with retention rates higher for academic students than for vocational students; this is attributed to the Reorganized Program of Studies. During the 1970s academic and vocational students were merged in the credit system, and retention rate differences can no longer be traced.

INTRODUCTION

The decade of the 1920s provides an appropriate starting point for a historical study of Ontario secondary school program innovations and student retention rates.

First, it is the decade when for the first time in the province's history, most students reached secondary school. High school attendance became the norm for the majority of teenagers.

Second, it is a decade of abundant published statistics. Ever since the mid-nineteenth century, statistical information had been stressed in annual reports of the Department of Public Instruction, and its successor, the Department of Education. Following the First World War, inspired by the creation of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in Ottawa, provincial education reports became even more profuse in their use of statistics. Through the 1920s it becomes progressively easier to extract relevant statistics on student attendance and student retention from these reports.

Finally, and most important, publicly-supported secondary education in Ontario assumed much of its modern format through a number of important reforms in the early 1920s. Changes occurred through provincial legislation and regulation, through provincial encouragement and exhortation, and through local pride and initiative. These changes, most of which affected retention rates at some point during the decade, were:

1. An increase in the age of compulsory school attendance from fourteen years to sixteen years, through the Adolescent School Attendance Act, effective 1 January 1921.

2. The abolition of all remaining tuition fees at the 50 per cent of secondary schools still charging such fees, effective 1 September 1921.

3. The reduction of the academic secondary school program from six to five years, through a one-year rather than a two-year Upper School, effective 1 January 1922.

4. The spread of secondary education throughout rural parts of the province via Continuation Schools and Fifth Book Classes.

5. The diversification of the curriculum beyond the academic/matriculation stream into broad provisions for vocational education, including agricultural education, business or commercial education, and technical or industrial education.

6. The spread of guidance/counselling services and diversified extracurricular activities -- all viewed as progressive attempts to harness and channel adolescent interests.

The decade of the 1970s provides an appropriate terminal point for this study. First, from a practical viewpoint, 1972/73 is the last year in which the Ontario Ministry of Education generated secondary school enrolment statistics on the basis of grade levels of students. Second, from a policy perspective, 1972/73 is the first year of a comprehensive series of studies on high school drop-outs undertaken by Cicely Watson and others. This historical study ends, therefore, where the Watson studies begin.

Beginning with the 1920s, and continuing through to the mid-1970s, this study will focus on the increasing numbers of students attending publicly-financed secondary school in Ontario, and the increasing numbers staying longer in those schools.

Gross retention rates from year to year will be determined by calculating the enrolment of a high school grade (for example, Lower School/Form II of 1922 or Grade 10 of 1972) as a percentage of the previous grade one year earlier (Lower School/Form I of 1921 or Grade 9 of 1971). Gross retention rates through the first four years of high school will be determined by calculating the fourth year enrolment (for example, Middle School/Form II of 1924 or Grade 10 of 1974) as a percentage of the first year enrolment three years earlier (Lower School/Form I of 1921 or Grade 9 of 1971).

These gross retention rates will not account for such factors as students spending longer than one year in a particular grade or class, students returning to high school after dropping out at some previous time, students transferring between publicly-supported and private high schools, or students transferring between Ontario and other provincial or foreign educational jurisdictions. But these gross retention rates will demonstrate general trends over a decade in time, as well as differences between decades.

Finally, increases and/or decreases in retention rates will be discussed against such factors as: program innovations in the secondary schools; economic conditions (e.g., labour force statistics on employment and unemployment in Ontario); and general societal factors influencing students' decisions to remain in or drop out of high school.

PART I: THE DECADE OF THE 1920S

Transition from Elementary to Secondary School

Students of the 1920s in Ontario's public and separate schools who wished to proceed beyond the final year of elementary education (known as the Senior Fourth Book or year, and corresponding to the present Grade 8) were required to pass high school admission or entrance examinations.

"The Entrance," as it was known to successive generations of Ontario pupils, was a provincially-set, though locally-administered and locally-marked, set of June examinations. While the better pupils in larger school systems might be allowed entrance on recommendation of their elementary school principal, most high school-bound pupils "sat" for the entrance examination each June. The average age of these pupils was fourteen.

The entrance examination, and the accompanying transition from elementary to secondary school, proved a major hurdle for students during the 1920s, as shown by Table 1.1 (below):

TABLE 1.1

Elementary/Secondary School Transition in Ontario, 1920-1929
Numbers of Students (1)

Year	June Enrolment Senior Fourth	Taking Entrance	Passing Entrance	Sept Enrolment 1st Year High
1920	39627	27916	22051	22138
1921	44539	31521	25160	23051
1922	51332	36114	27560	27152
1923	60490	38048	29889	28274
1924	55181	38987	32340	30628
1925	52438	40409	31619	31972
1926	58094	42642	35024	34427
1927	56529	44121	37451	41039
1928	57847	46047	38567	42836
1929	61866	46797	38160	43288
%Increase 1920-29	56	67	78	95

Enrolment statistics for the Senior Fourth Book or class are calculated by adding the totals of urban public schools, rural public schools, urban separate schools and rural separate schools. Published statistics prior to 1923 did not separate Fourth Book enrolments into Junior Fourth (Grade 7) and Senior Fourth (Grade 8); hence figures for 1920-1922 are estimates only, based on a 60/40 per cent split between Junior Fourth and Senior Fourth.

Enrolment statistics for the first year of secondary school are calculated by adding the totals of Lower School/Form I from the high schools and collegiate institutes; Lower School/Form I from the continuation schools; Fifth Book Classes (advanced work in certain public and separate schools); and Year I from the vocational schools.

Table 1.1 (above) shows rising numbers in all categories during the period 1920-1929. Senior Fourth enrolments jumped from 39,627 to 61,866 -- an increase of 56 per cent. The number of students taking the entrance examination climbed from 27,916

to 46,787 -- a 67 per cent increase. The number of students passing the Entrance rose from 22,051 to 38,160 -- an even greater increase at 78 per cent. Finally, enrolment in first year of a secondary education program mushroomed from 22,138 to 43,288, a whopping 95 per cent increase.

In certain years, particularly 1927-1929, enrolment in first year high school programs is actually greater than the number of pupils passing the entrance examination. This apparent discrepancy is caused by two factors: students taking more than one year to complete first year high school; and students admitted to special vocational educational programs without passing the entrance examination.

Transition from elementary to secondary school can also be considered in percentage terms, as in Table 1.2 (below):

TABLE 1.2

Elementary/Secondary School Transition in Ontario, 1920-1929
Percentages of Students (2)

Year	%Sr 4th Pupils Taking Entrance	%Passing to Taking Entrance	%Passing to Senior 4th Enrolment	%First Year HS to Sr 4th Enrolment
1920	70	79	56	56
1921	71	80	57	52
1922	70	76	53	53
1923	63	79	49	48
1924	71	83	60	51
1925	77	78	60	60
1926	73	82	61	61
1927	78	85	66	73
1928	80	84	67	74
1929	76	82	62	70
1920-24	69	79	55	52
1925-29	77	82	63	68

Who passed the entrance examination? Departmental statistics do not distinguish successful and unsuccessful students by gender or by religious, ethnic, or socio-economic background. Statistics for individual examination centres -- available for 1920 through 1926 -- do show differences from one locality to another, but not any great differences between larger and smaller communities, or between northern and southern Ontario. Passing rates from selected larger centres such as Barrie (86%) and Fort William (89%) are higher than the provincial average (79.6%) during this period; slightly lower from medium-size centres such as Alexandria (79%) and Haileybury (75%); then higher again from smaller centres such as Acton (90%) and Blind River (81%). (3)

Local variations appear less significant than the steadily rising numbers of pupils who each year took the entrance examination, passed it, and moved on to some form of secondary education.

Despite slight dips and rises in year-by-year percentages revealed in Table 1.2 (above), differences are evident in comparisons between the first and second halves of the decade. The percentage of Senior Fourth students taking the entrance examination increased from 69 in the 1920-24 period to 77 in the 1925-29 period. At the same time the percentage of students passing this examination increased from 79 to 82 in terms of numbers taking, and from 55 to 63 in terms of Senior Fourth enrolment. Finally, the percentage of first year high school students to Senior Fourth pupils rose from 52 in the first half of the decade to 68 in the second half.

Explaining the Increase in Secondary School Admissions

Why were more and more Ontario students of the 1920s proceeding on to high school than ever before?

Was it the Adolescent School Attendance Act?

This provincial law, which raised the age of compulsory attendance from fourteen to sixteen years, effective 1 January 1921, appears to be a major contributing factor. Educators were quick to point out the apparent results of the Act. By the end of 1921 newly appointed provincial attendance officer J.P. Cowles

reported that "the increase in urban centres is considerable." St. Catharines showed the highest gains -- 145 per cent for fourteen-year-olds and 41 per cent for fifteen-year-olds -- while Fort William, Windsor, London, Guelph, Woodstock, Hamilton, and Peterborough were "all doing well." (4)

Politicians concurred on the importance of this legislation. "Increased attendance since the Act became operative," noted Premier and Minister of Education G. Howard Ferguson in 1923, was "particularly noticeable in the upper forms of the elementary schools and in the lower forms of the secondary schools." (5)

Yet the Adolescent School Attendance Act made relatively little difference to high school attendance during its first year of operation. Table 1.2 (above) shows September 1921 enrolments in the first year of secondary education up only 4 per cent over September 1920, one of the smallest increases of the decade. A more significant increase of 15 per cent is evident the following year (September 1922 over September 1921), suggesting a one-year delay in the Act's impact on secondary education. Yet even that 1921-22 increase was topped by a 16 per cent jump in first year enrolments between September 1926 and 1927.

The Adolescent School Attendance Act did not make the dramatic impact on high school enrolments many had predicted. The government had prepared the ground with earlier permissive legislation, with amendments to the Factories Act prohibiting employment of youngsters under sixteen, amendments to the Mothers' Allowances

Act providing financial support for widows' children up to age sixteen, and by allowing attendance exemptions for youngsters whose employment was essential to the family's economic welfare.

While the Adolescent School Attendance Act was certainly important in boosting high school admissions, it alone cannot totally explain the increased rush of pupils into the secondary schools during the 1920s.

How important, then, was the abolition of high school tuition fees in explaining the increase in the number of Senior Fourth pupils continuing their education?

All remaining tuition fees were abolished at the 50 per cent of high schools still charging them, effective 1 September 1921. Such fees had remained relatively low for many years, not rising with general twentieth century wage and price increases. Thus they constituted more of a symbolic gesture than an economic barrier. Still, their final abolition might have encouraged more elementary school graduates to continue their education.

Yet, as pointed out above, the September 1920/September 1921 increase in first year secondary education enrolments was just 4 per cent, one of the smallest increases of the decade. And, enrolment jumps in schools that had just abolished such fees were not significantly greater than in schools which had voluntarily abolished tuition fees years earlier. (6)

"The abolition of fees was undoubtedly a factor," admitted Ferguson in 1925, explaining high school enrolment increases,

"but the movement had given evidence of vigorous life before that happened." (7)

How significant, then, was the increased availability of secondary school education in more remote regions of the province during the 1920s? The decade witnessed the rapid spread of continuation schools and Fifth Book classes through village and rural Ontario. By 1923 the province's 189 continuation schools outnumbered the total of urban high schools and collegiate institutes; in 1930 the number reached an all-time high of 220. Fifth Book classes increased apace.

Yet rural increases in first year high school enrolments lagged behind urban increases during the decade. Beginning pupils in continuation schools and Fifth Book classes climbed from 3720 in 1920 to 6086 in 1929, an increase of 64 per cent. Yet beginning pupils in high schools, collegiate institutes, and vocational schools jumped from 18,620 in 1920 to 37,138 in 1929, an increase of just over 100 per cent.

How important, then, were increased provisions for vocational education during the period?

Vocational educational facilities mushroomed throughout the province in the years following Ontario's 1911 Industrial Education Act and Ottawa's 1919 Technical Education Act. During the first decade of growth, most vocational school expansion occurred in segregated all-technical or all-commercial high schools. During the 1920s, however, the trend was toward composite

schools where technical, commercial, (and occasional agricultural) programs were housed side-by-side with academic programs. Such composite schools, it was argued, made it easier to channel students into appropriate programs.

In 1919 vocational education programs were available at sixteen segregated technical and commercial high schools; ten years later a total of fifty-one segregated and composite schools offered such work. Between 1923 and 1929, enrolment in first year vocational programs increased from 26 to 37 per cent of total first year urban secondary school enrolment.

Less tangible factors also help explain the rush to high schools in the years following the First World War -- perceived vanishing employment opportunities for early leavers, plus a general desire on the part of both parents and children for more schooling.

Technological advances in business and industry seemed to reduce the need for unskilled labour. Students were encouraged as never before to remain in their classrooms. "Each day in High School adds $25.00 to his life's earnings," trumpeted a popular magazine of the day. "Modern business, with its intensity and complexity, calls for the highest degree of training for those who seek success in it," declared a Toronto department store executive. (8)

Nevertheless, a generally healthy economy provided economic incentives for many students to leave school. The Dominion Bureau

of Statistics' Employment Index for Ontario rose from 90.6 in 1921 to 123.1 in 1929 (Base 1926=100). At the same time, DBS Ontario unemployment rates for June dropped from an average of 3.7 per cent in the first half of the decade to 2.7 per cent in the second half; December rates showed a corresponding drop from 8.2 to 6.2 per cent. (9)

Finally, in explaining the increase in high school attendance, many parents were concerned about the social and moral temptations confronting their offspring during the "roaring" 1920s, and thus tacitly supported the strictly supervised atmosphere and the socialization role promised by the Ontario high school. Educators throughout the province spoke frequently of this "character building" and "citizenship training" mission. In broader terms, the Ontario high school assumed many of the attributes of the nineteenth century elementary school and became an institution of child or teenage custodianship.

Pupils of the 1920s looked forward to high school attendance with eager anticipation. With its diverse curriculum, expanded physical facilities, and opportunities for peer-group contact, the high school offered an exciting interlude between the carefree days of childhood and the responsibilities of adulthood. "It often means an entrance into a new world, cultural and social," wrote one secondary school principal in 1923, "in fact a complete revolution in the life of the student, transferring him from one plane of life to another vastly different." (10)

There was no stopping the rush to the high schools. "The movement had started before the war," claimed another principal in retrospect. "The real effect of the war was to check the rising tendency to attend secondary schools. When the damming back was removed by the termination of the war, we had the sudden great rise in attendance." (11) While Ontario's population increased by 17 per cent through the decade of the 1920s, secondary school enrolment quadrupled.

Progress Through Secondary School

Having arrived at the doors of the high school in increasing numbers, how did the students of the 1920s fare in their progress through the first four years of secondary education, the equivalent of today's Grade 9 through Grade 12?

In the high schools, collegiate institutes, and continuation schools of the 1920s these four years were known as Lower School/Form I, Lower School/Form II, Middle School/ Form I and Middle School/Form II. In the vocational schools they were known simply as First Year, Second Year, Third Year and Fourth Year. In the public and separate schools, students enrolled for a year or two in work beyond the Fourth Book were classified as being in the Fifth Book. Table 1.3 (below) demonstrates general progress:

TABLE 1.3

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1920-1929
Number of Students (12)

Year	Lower School Form I (or equiv)	Lower School Form II (or equiv)	Middle School Form I (or equiv)	Middle School Form II (or equiv)
1920	22138	11863	5882	3908
1921	23051	13639	8366	5590
1922	27152	14836	8799	5872
1923	28274	15259	10416	6942
1924	30628	19622	13007	8672
1925	31972	20613	13936	9291
1926	34427	20347	13527	9018
1927	41039	25101	15863	10525
1928	42836	26725	16610	10249
1929	43288	27250	16963	9702
1920/29 Increase	95%	130%	180%	148%

Totals are determined by combining individually published statistics for the several types of secondary education schools and classes -- high schools and collegiate institutes, continuation schools, vocational schools and programs, and Fifth Book classes in public and separate schools.

Published statistics for Middle School enrolment were not differentiated between Middle School/Form I and Middle School/Form II until 1927. Thus breakdowns for the years 1920 to 1926 are estimated on a basis of 60 per cent of the total Middle School enrolment in Form I and 40 per cent in Form II.

Table 1.3 (above) shows rising numbers of students remaining progressively longer in high school through the decade of the 1920s. First year enrolments increased 95% during the decade, second year enrolments 130%, third year enrolments 180%, and fourth year enrolments 148%. The rise in percentage increases

peaked with the third year, tapering off somewhat in the fourth year. This may be explained by the toll taken by the academically stringent Middle School Examinations. Students began writing these examinations in some of their Middle School subjects at the end of their third year of high school; those who did poorly may not have attempted a fourth year.

Table 1.4 (below) expresses each grade's enrolment as a percentage of the enrolment in the preceding class one year earlier. Though not able to account for the number of students "repeating" a year, or returning after dropping out, etc., these figures suggest approximate retention rates for the decade:

TABLE 1.4

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1920-1929
Percentages of Students (13)

Year	LS Form II as % of LS Form I one year before (or equiv)	MS Form I as % of LS Form II one year before (or equiv)	MS Form II as % of MS Form I one year before (or equiv)	MS Form II as % of LS Form I three years before (or equiv)
1920	71	51	70	26
1921	61	71	95	35
1922	64	65	70	35
1923	56	70	79	31
1924	70	85	83	37
1925	67	70	71	34
1926	64	66	65	32
1927	73	78	78	34
1928	65	66	65	32
1929	64	63	58	28
1920/24	64	68	79	33
1925/29	67	69	67	34

Table 1.4 (above) shows slight dips and rises in gross retention rates on a year-by-year basis. More important are the comparisons between the first half of the decade (1920-24) and the second half of the decade (1925-29):

* Second year enrolment expressed as a percentage of first year enrolment, one year earlier, rose from 64 to 67.

* Third year enrolment expressed as a percentage of second year enrolment, one year earlier, rose from 68 to 69.

* Fourth year enrolment expressed as a percentage of third year enrolment, one year earlier, fell from 79 to 67.

* Fourth year enrolment expressed as a percentage of first year enrolment, three years earlier, rose from 33 to 34.

Despite the increased rush of pupils into the high schools, retention rates did not climb dramatically during the 1920s; in fact gross retention rates between third and fourth year actually declined from the first to the second half of the decade.

For most pupils, the academic challenge of the Ontario secondary school remained formidable. Increased enrolments did not prompt radical changes in the academic high school program. Upper School was reduced from two years to one in length, but that affected only those beyond the fourth year. Those in first through fourth years experienced only minor adjustments in course load, optional subjects, and examination pressures.

Students in most secondary schools -- vocational schools excepted -- endured a daily regimen of English and history, ancient and modern languages, mathematics and science. The social-

service thrust of the American report of 1918, The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, did not penetrate Ontario. There was little place for the new social science disciplines, little opportunity to study the contemporary worlds of business or labour.

A few innovative teachers might use the traditional subjects to focus on such contemporary concerns. But most teachers used a deductive rather than an inductive approach, starting with a prescribed body of knowledge that must be mastered, rather than with the immediate interests of students.

Yet the pupils in Ontario high school classrooms in the 1920s came from wider backgrounds than had been the case a generation earlier. "Many of the pupils no longer belong to those social levels in the community for whose children a complete high school education and subsequent entrance upon the university is regarded as a social and professional necessity," concluded a 1929 national study. "Such pupils may enter high school and then drop out again if their education does not appear to be satisfying any strong and rather immediate need." (14)

They did drop out of high school through the 1920s. The percentage of fourth year students to first year students of three years earlier increased from 33 to just 34 per cent between the first and second halves of the decade. The percentage of fourth year high school students to final year elementary students of four years earlier stood at just 17 per cent in 1929.

Different Rates of Progress Through the Secondary School

Did differences in gender, or location, or program make any difference? Table 1.5 (below) shows gender differences with regard to retention rates:

TABLE 1.5

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1920-1929
Gender Differences (15)

Middle School/Form II enrolment expressed as a percentage of Lower School/Form I enrolment of three years before, in the high schools, collegiate institutes, continuation schools, and (from 1924) the vocational schools. (Fifth Book Classes are excluded because data is lacking on gender of pupils.)

	Year	Boys	Girls	
	1923	31	35	
	1924	35	41	
	1925	35	31	
	1926	31	26	
	1927	37	36	
	1928	35	33	
	1929	33	28	

Table 1.5 (above)indicates that retention rates for girls were higher than for boys during the early years of the decade. But from 1925 on, the situation reversed, with boys showing higher retention rates than girls -- varying from a one per cent difference in 1927 to 5 per cent differences in 1926 and 1929.

Gender differences in gross retention rates during the second half of the decade are explained by a variety of societal

and economic factors: secondary school programs geared more to male than to female interests; family stay-at-school pressures brought more strongly to bear on sons than on daughters; greater availability of jobs for girls in the rapidly expanding office and merchandising worlds of the 1920s.

Urban/rural retention rates also show differences, as revealed in Table 1.6 (below):

TABLE 1.6

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1920-1929
Urban/Rural Differences Within Academic Schools (16)

Middle School/Form II enrolment expressed as a percentage of Lower School/Form I enrolment three years previously, for urban academic secondary schools (high schools and collegiate institutes) and rural academic secondary schools (continuation schools):

Year	Urban Collegiates and High Schools	Village and Rural Continuation Schools
1923	40	44
1924	41	40
1925	40	37
1926	37	35
1927	44	30
1928	44	34
1929	40	33

Figures for continuation schools in Table 1.6 (above) must be interpreted with caution, since better students often transferred into nearby town and city high schools after a year or two in continuation schools. Also, a small number of continuation schools

offered only Lower School work.

Nevertheless, differences in gross retention rates are evident between urban and rural academic secondary schools from 1924 through the remainder of the decade -- ranging from a one percent difference in 1924 to a 10 per cent difference in 1928. Urban schools attracted better qualified and more experienced teachers, besides offering broader choices of courses. Urban schools also enjoyed greater community acceptance; during the 1920s rural high schools were sometimes viewed negatively as "educating the boys and girls off the farm". (17)

Retention rates between urban academic programs and urban vocational programs also show differences, as revealed in Table 1.7 (below):

TABLE 1.7

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1920-1929
Academic/Vocational Differences Within Urban Schools (18)

Middle School/Form II enrolment expressed as a percentage of Lower School/Form I enrolment three years previously, for urban academic schools (high schools and collegiate institutes, and academic programs within composite schools) and urban vocational schools (technical schools and commercial schools, and vocational programs within composite schools):

Year	Academic Schools in Urban Centres	Vocational Schools in Urban Centres
1924	41	19
1925	40	24
1926	37	13
1927	44	17
1928	44	12
1929	40	9

Table 1.7 (above) reveals pronounced differences in retention rates between academic and vocational students in the secondary schools of the 1920s -- differences widening from 16 per cent in 1925 to 31 per cent in 1929. These differences are explained by such factors as: large numbers of vocational pupils enrolled in one-year and two-year terminal programs; availability of private business schools and their continuing reputation for superior practical training; plus the ease of all vocational school pupils in entering the job market during the economically buoyant mid and late 1920s.

Conclusions: Retention Rates in the 1920s

The percentage of first year secondary school enrolments to final year elementary school enrolments one year earlier rose from 52 in the first half of the decade to 68 in the second half. This rise is attributed to several factors: the increase in the age of compulsory school attendance from fourteen to sixteen years; the abolition of all remaining high school tuition fees; the spread of secondary education through rural Ontario; the increase in vocational education programs; the increasing belief that elementary education alone was no longer sufficient for the economic and social challenges of the twentieth century.

High school retention rates, however, rose less dramatically than high school admission rates during the 1920s. Second

year enrolments as a percentage of first year enrolments, one year earlier, increased from 64 during the first half of the decade to 67 during the second half. During the same period, third year enrolments as a percentage of second year enrolments, one year earlier, rose from 68 to just 69, fourth year to third year actually fell from 79 to 67, while fourth year to first year, three years earlier, inched up from 33 to 34. Minor changes in the secondary school academic program at the beginning of the decade had minimum impact on retention rates.

Retention rates during the 1920s were influenced by gender, by location, and by type of academic program. During this decade, gross retention rates were higher for boys than for girls, higher in urban academic schools than in rural academic schools, and higher in urban academic programs than in urban vocational programs.

PART II. THE DECADE OF THE 1930S

Transition from Elementary to Secondary School

Increasing numbers of Ontario students moved on from the final year of publicly-supported elementary education to the first year of publicly-supported secondary education through the 1930s. Figures are shown in Table 2.1 (below):

TABLE 2.1

Elementary/Secondary School Transition in Ontario, 1930-1939
Numbers of Students (19)

Year	June Enrolment Senior Fourth (Grade VIII)	Taking Entrance Exam	Passing Entrance Exam	Sept. Enrolment 1st Year High (Grade IX)
1930	61993	47438	38494	41095
1931	51750	49544	41468	38777
1932	54757	50280	40718	41783
1933	57220	51593	43634	42422
1934	59260	53050	44097	42327
1935	65227	55092	45737	42764
1936	57746	54991	46320	43534
1937	57112	55307	46969	43005
1938	57548	55351	47717	43675
1939	59926	57125	49582	44305
%Increase 1930-39	-3	17	29	8

While Senior Fourth/Grade VIII enrolments dropped 3 per cent during the decade (due to demographic factors), the number of students taking the entrance examination increased 17 per

cent, and the number of students passing jumped 29 per cent.

Meanwhile, enrolments in first year of secondary school (Lower School/Form I or Grade IX) increased 8 per cent. In certain years, as in the previcus decade, first year high school enrolments surpassed the number writing the entrance examination, as some students took more than one year to complete the grade, while others were admitted to special vocational education programs without passing the Entrance.

Transition from elementary to secondary school can also be considered in percentage terms, as in Table 2.2 (below):

TABLE 2.2

Elementary/Secondary School Transition in Ontario, 1930-1939
Percentages of Students (20)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decade)

Year	%Sr 4th Pupils Taking Entrance	%Passing to Taking Entrance	%Passing to Senior 4th Enrolment	%First Year HS to Sr 4th Enrolment
1930	77	81	62	66
1931	96	84	80	75
1932	92	81	74	76
1933	90	85	80	74
1934	90	83	74	71
1935	84	83	70	65
1936	95	84	80	75
1937	97	85	82	75
1938	96	86	83	72
1939	95	87	83	74
1920-24	69	79	55	52
1925-29	77	82	63	68
1930-34	89	83	74	72
1935-39	93	85	80	72

Despite slight dips and rises in year-by-year percentages through the 1930s, dramatic differences are evident in comparisons with the previous decade. The percentage of Senior Fourth students taking the entrance examination increased from 69 in the early 1920s to 93 in the late 1930s. Over the same time period the percentage of students passing this examination increased from 79 to 85 in terms of numbers taking, and from 55 to 80 in terms of Senior Fourth enrolment. Finally, the percentage of first year high school students to Senior Fourth pupils the previous year rose from 52 in the early 1920s to 72 in the late 1930s.

Explaining the Increase in Secondary School Admissions

Why did more Ontario students of the 1930s proceed to high school than ever before?

The severe economic depression of the decade undoubtedly had an impact on high school admissions. Older students in the Senior Fourth class, who earlier might have dropped out and entered the work force as soon as they reached age sixteen, were now encouraged to remain in the classroom, try the entrance examination and, if successful, continue on to high school.

Younger students, who once might have sought attendance exemptions under the Adolescent School Attendance Act, arguing that their earning potential in low-income families took precedence over secondary school attendance, were also now more likely

to stay beyond elementary school. During the 1925-26 school year, 5,704 fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds, 6.4 per cent of the "adolescent" population, were exempted from attending school; twelve years later this figure fell to 3,637, or 3.5 per cent. (21)

Yet economic factors alone scarcely explain the total increase in the percentage of students continuing on to high school. Additional explanations are found in changes within the provincial education system.

The entrance examination itself was changing. Each year more local school boards earned the right to pass their better Entrance students on principals' recommendations, reducing the number who literally "sat" for this traumatic examination. The elementary/secondary transition gradually became easier, the Entrance hurdle less formidable.

Changes in nomenclature symbolized the changing nature of the elementary-to-secondary school transition. Prior to 1937, the final year of elementary school was known as the Senior Fourth, while the first year of an academic secondary school was called Lower School/Form I. Similar terminology was not considered necessary for these two years.

Then in 1937, grade terminology was standardized throughout the elementary and secondary schools. The final year of elementary school became Grade VIII, the first year of secondary school Grade IX. Similar terminology suggested an easier transition from one level of education to the next.

Changes in the Grade IX curriculum, introduced in September 1937, accompanied this change in nomenclature. Grade IX became a common year for all students, with the choice of matriculation, technical, or commercial programs delayed until the beginning of Grade X. The new Grade IX curriculum included English, social studies, health, mathematics, science or agriculture, French, home economics or general shop, music or art, and business practice.

The elimination of Grade IX Latin caused consternation among classicists and traditionalists. But Duncan McArthur, deputy minister of education, saw the elimination of Latin as the only way to ensure that Grade IX would be "a year of testing," in which the student could try "different lines under the guidance and direction of teachers," and "reach conclusions regarding particular capabilities and aptitudes". (22)

It was easier to announce a new Grade IX curriculum, however, than to mandate its adoption throughout the province. Most local school boards had trouble providing facilities and qualified teachers for the new home economics and general shop (industrial arts) courses. When wartime emergencies brought a halt to school construction in late 1940, just ninety-five high schools and 20 per cent of Grade IX pupils were fully immersed in the new program. (23)

Still, 1937 saw 97 per cent of Grade VIII pupils take the entrance examination, the highest percentage of the decade. The nomenclature change from Lower School/Form I to Grade IX may

have been largely symbolic, and the new Grade IX curriculum more an ideal than an immediate reality -- but more elementary school pupils sought secondary school admission than ever before.

Progress Through Secondary School

Once enrolled in secondary school, how did the students of the 1930s fare in their progress through the grades? Table 2.3 (below) demonstrates general progress through the grades of all students in all publicly-supported secondary school programs in Ontario:

TABLE 2.3

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1930-1939
Numbers of Students (24)

Year	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
1930	41095	25625	15151	8484
1931	38777	26297	17091	10554
1932	41783	28530	19657	12967
1933	42422	29457	21089	14398
1934	42327	28961	20456	14079
1935	42764	29016	20712	13633
1936	43534	30178	20353	13883
1937	43005	29184	20991	13268
1938	43675	30632	21396	13945
1939	44305	33152	23374	15502
1930/39 Increase	8%	29%	55%	83%

Table 2.3 (above) shows increasing numbers of students in each of the first four years of secondary school during the 1930s. The higher the grade, the more dramatic the increase. While first year enrolments were up just 9 per cent between 1930 and 1939, second year enrolments jumped 29 per cent, third year 55 per cent, and fourth year 83 per cent.

Table 2.4 (below) demonstrates progress through the secondary school grades in percentages, providing comparisons between the 1930s and the previous decade:

TABLE 2.4

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1930-1939
Percentages of Students (25)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decade)

Year	2nd Year as % of 1st Year one year earlier	3rd Year as % of 2nd Year one year earlier	4th Year as % of 3rd Year one year earlier	4th Year as % of 1st Year three years earlier
1930	60	56	50	21
1931	64	68	70	25
1932	73	75	75	30
1933	70	74	73	35
1934	68	69	67	39
1935	69	72	66	35
1936	70	70	67	36
1937	67	70	65	36
1938	71	73	66	37
1939	76	76	72	40
1920/24	64	68	79	33
1925/29	67	69	67	34
1930/34	67	68	67	30
1935/39	71	72	67	37

Table 2.4 (above) shows slight dips and rises in retention rates on a year-by-year basis. More important are the comparisons between the 1920s and the 1930s. Taking the second half of each decade, we find that:

* Second year enrolment expressed as a percentage of first year enrolment, one year earlier, rose from 67 to 71.

* Third year enrolment expressed as a percentage of second year enrolment, one year earlier, rose from 69 to 72.

* Fourth year enrolment expressed as a percentage of third year enrolment, one year earlier, remained steady at 67.

* Fourth year enrolment expressed as a percentage of first year enrolment, three years earlier, rose from 34 to 37.

To what extent were rising retention rates caused by program changes of the 1930s?

Changes in the academic high school program were introduced one year at a time, beginning with the new Grade IX of 1937. In 1938 Grade X offered a common core of English, social studies and health, plus optional subjects from one of four areas: general, industrial arts, household arts, or commercial. The new Grade XI (introduced in 1939) and Grade XII (in 1940) featured more options within each area.

Also in 1937, the former junior matriculation and senior matriculation certificates were replaced by secondary school graduation and honour graduation diplomas, to emphasize the idea that the high school's function was primarily preparation for life rather than preparation for university. Two years later,

all lower school and middle school departmental examinations were replaced by in-school pass/fail recommendations, thus reducing the examination trauma.

Such changes in program, nomenclature, and examinations came too late, however, to have significant influences on retention rates in the 1930s. These rates were rising well before the 1937 changes, changes that took several years to penetrate the majority of Ontario schools.

A much stronger influence on rising retention rates came from the severe economic depression of the decade.

Reports from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics underline the severity of the depression. Ontario's employment index (Base 1926=100) plummeted from a high of 123.1 in 1929 to a low of 84.2 in 1933, rose gradually to 118.3 in 1937, fell again in 1938, and did not recover 1920s levels until the wartime production years of the 1940s. (26)

Unemployment percentages from Ontario labour unions revealed a similar trend. Between 1925-29, June unemployment rates averaged 2.7 per cent, while December averaged 6.2 per cent. By 1932 the June rate reached 23.4 per cent and the December rate 28.5 per cent. Percentages gradually fell over the next five years, rose again in 1938, and, like the employment index cited, did not recover 1920s levels until the 1940s. (27)

Some educators claimed the increases in high school attendance and student retention rates had little or nothing to do with

the economic depression, but were due to higher university admission requirements or were "but a trend of the times". Others argued that more pupils were kept out of school to supplement family earnings than were kept in school because there were no jobs for them. (28)

Yet the majority of senior administrators, who had to provide the pupil places, and school trustees, responsible for raising the bulk of the money, saw a close connection between the state of the economy and secondary school attendance. Toronto trustee John Corcoran believed depression-induced attendance cost his board an extra $300,000 annually, yet argued that "there is no more effective welfare work being done anywhere". (29) Suburban York Township reduced from $100 to $25 the special fee for students in their seventh year of high school, arguing that "it was better for students to be attending school than having nothing to occupy their minds". (30)

So pupils stayed in high school. During the 1920s about one in three first year students reached fourth year; by the end of the 1930s, two out of five students progressed that far.

Different Rates of Progress Through the Secondary School

In the 1930s as in the 1920s, gender, location, and program differences influenced retention rates. Table 2.5 (below) demonstrates gender differences:

TABLE 2.5

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1930-1939
Gender Differences (31)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decade)

Fourth year secondary school enrolments expressed as a percentage of first year enrolments three years earlier, in high schools, collegiate institutes, continuation schools, vocational schools, and Fifth Book classes.

	Year	Boys	Girls	
	1930	33	24	
	1931	30	25	
	1932	33	30	
	1933	34	36	
	1934	40	38	
	1935	34	36	
	1936	34	38	
	1937	33	38	
	1938	34	39	
	1939	38	41	
	1925/29	37	31	
	1930/34	34	31	
	1935/39	35	38	

Table 2.5 (above) indicates a slippage in male retention rates from 37 to 35 per cent between the late 1920s and late 1930s, accompanied by a dramatic increase in female retenion rates from 31 to 38 per cent during this same period. In 1935 the retention rate for female students surpassed that for male students, and remained higher for the rest of the decade.

What happened in the 1930s to reverse male/female differences in retention rates? Did boys leave school ahead of girls because they had an easier time getting jobs in the short run? Or because they were more discouraged about long-range job prospects, and

concluded that remaining in school through to graduation would be a futile exercise? Did girls stay longer in school because of the gradual decline of traditional societal prejudices against "higher" education for women?

Urban/rural retention rates also show differences, as revealed in Table 2.6 (below):

TABLE 2.6

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1930-1939 Urban/Rural Differences Within Academic Schools (32)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decade)

Fourth year enrolments expressed as a percentage of first year enrolments three years earlier, for urban academic schools (high schools and collegiate institutes) and rural academic schools (continuation schools):

	Year	Urban Collegiates and High Schools	Village and Rural Continuation Schools
	1930	27	31
	1931	33	36
	1932	41	51
	1933	50	57
	1934	52	56
	1935	47	50
	1936	48	44
	1937	49	42
	1938	51	43
	1939	53	49
	1925/29	41	34
	1930/34	41	46
	1935/39	50	46

Figures for continuation schools in Table 2.6 (above) must be interpreted with caution. As in the previous decade, students

often transferred into nearby town or city high schools after a year or two in continuation schools, either for program or instructional reasons.

Nevertheless, an unusual trend is noticeable in the first half of the 1930s, as the supposedly inferior continuation schools demonstrated higher retention rates than the urban high schools and collegiate institutes. The differences ranged from 3 to 10 per cent, averaging 5 per cent for the 1930-34 period. Were employment opportunities more limited in rural than in urban areas, thus encouraging students to remain longer in the continuation schools?

Whatever the case, the situation is reversed in the second half of the 1930s, as retention rates in the urban academic high schools surpass those of the continuation schools -- as they did during the 1920s.

Retention rates between urban academic programs and urban vocational programs also show differences, as revealed in table 2.7 (below):

TABLE 2.7

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1930-1939
Academic/Vocational Differences Within Urban Schools (33)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decade)

Fourth year enrolments expressed as a percentage of first year enrolments three years previously, for urban academic schools (high schools and collegiate institutes, and academic programs within composite schools) and urban vocational schools (technical schools, commercial schools, and vocational programs within composite schools):

Year	Academic Schools in Urban Centres	Vocational Schools in Urban Centres
1930	27	9
1931	33	9
1932	41	12
1933	50	17
1934	52	19
1935	47	18
1936	48	19
1937	49	18
1938	51	20
1939	53	25
1925/29	41	15
1930/34	41	11
1935/39	50	20

Table 2.7 (above) reveals dramatic differences in retention rates between academic and vocational students during the 1930s, though the gap narrowed somewhat towards the end of the decade. The academic student of the early 1930s was almost four times as likely to reach the fourth year of high school as his or her vocational counterpart; at the end of the period he or she was still two and a half times as likely to progress that far.

These differences are explained by such factors as: large numbers of vocational school pupils enrolled in one-year and two-year terminal programs, and the inability of four-year vocational programs to guarantee jobs at the end of the training period.

Conclusions: Retention Rates in the 1930s

The percentage of first year secondary school enrolments to final year elementary school enrolments one year earlier rose from 68 during the second half of the 1920s to 72 during the second half of the 1930s. This rise is attributed in part to the depressed economic situation of the latter decade, and in part to educational reforms such as a changing secondary school entrance examination and a new Grade IX curriculum.

Increases in high school retention rates paralleled this increase in admissions. Second year enrolments as a percentage of first year enrolments, one year earlier, rose from 67 to 71 per cent; third year to second year, one year earlier, rose from 69 to 72 per cent; fourth year to third year, one year earlier, remained steady at 67; and fourth year to first year, three years earlier, rose from 34 to 37. These increases in gross retention rates are attributed largely to the economic depression of the decade; high school program changes had minimal impact.

Retention rates during the 1930s continued to be influenced

by gender, by location, and by type of program. Gross retention rates were higher for boys than girls during the first half of the decade, higher for girls than boys during the second half. Gross retention rates were higher for rural academic students than for urban academic students during the first half of the decade, higher for urban than rural during the second half. Retention rates for urban academic programs remained consistently higher than rates for urban vocational programs throughout the decade.

PART III: THE DECADE OF THE 1940S

Transition from Elementary to Secondary School

Declining birth rates in the late 1920s and through the 1930s produced decreases in the numbers of Ontario students enrolled in Grade VIII through the 1940s. Figures are shown in Table 3.1 (below):

TABLE 3.1

Elementary/Secondary School Transition in Ontario, 1940-1949
Numbers of Students (34)

Year	Grade VIII Enrolment May of Year	Taking Entrance Exam	Passing Entrance Exam	Grade IX Enrolment Next May
1940	62014	56832	47942	41162
1941	57801	55255	47011	39913
1942	49884	48829	43353	35337
1943	50173	47862	42061	39367
1944	53684	50355	46364	44297
1945	54944	52108	45778	46060
1946	57525	54535	47427	47030
1947	56595	52399	46058	45433
1948	56201	52766	47632	47112
1949	55524	52834	47239	48024
% Increase 1940-49	-10	-7	-1	17

While Grade VIII enrolments declined 10 per cent, the number of students taking the entrance examination declined only 7 per cent, and the number of students passing declined only one per cent. Meanwhile, Grade IX enrolments increased 17 per cent.

Transition from elementary to secondary school can also be considered in percentage terms, as in Table 3.2 (below):

TABLE 3.2

Elementary/Secondary School Transition in Ontario, 1940-1949
Percentages of Students (35)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

Year	%Grade VIII Taking Entrance Exam	%Passing to Taking Entrance Exam	%Passing to Grade VIII Enrol	%Next Year's Grade IX to This Year's Grade VIII
1940	92	84	77	66
1941	96	85	81	70
1942	98	89	87	70
1943	95	88	84	78
1944	94	92	86	82
1945	97	88	83	84
1946	95	87	83	82
1947	93	88	82	80
1948	94	90	85	84
1949	95	90	85	86
1920-29	73	81	59	60
1930-39	91	84	77	72
1940-49	95	88	79	78

Despite slight dips and rises in year-by-year percentages through the 1940s, dramatic differerences are evident in comparisons with previous decades. The percentage of Grade VIII students taking the entrance examination increased from 73 in the 1920s to 95 in the 1940s. Over the same time period the percentage of students passing this examination increased from 81 to 88

in terms of numbers taking, and from 59 to 79 in terms of Grade VIII enrolment. Finally, the percentage of first year high school (Grade IX) pupils to final year elementary school school (Grade VIII) pupils the previous year rose from 60 to 78.

Explaining the Increase in Secondary School Admissions

Why did more Ontario students of the 1940s proceed to high school than ever before?

Economic factors offer little assistance in determining an explanation. Unlike the 1930s, there was no economic depression, no shortage of jobs, to persuade older and/or marginal Grade VIII pupils to remain in school. Despite the abundance of jobs produced by wartime industrial production in the first half of the decade, and by the post-war boom of the second half, students stayed in school as never before, wrote the entrance examination, and moved on to high school.

Changes in the school system, introduced in earlier years, helped ease this elementary/secondary transition through the 1940s. The entrance examination was now but a shadow of its former self. Each year fewer students formally "sat" for the exam, as more and more local boards recommended more and more of their pupils for automatic transition from Grade VIII to Grade IX. Finally, in 1949, the entrance examination was formally abolished by the Department of Education.

The new Grade IX core curriculum, first introduced in 1937, undoubtedly persuaded more students to try high school. The first year of high school was now a year without Latin, and it was a common year shared by academic, technical, and commercial students. The percentage of Grade IX pupils in this new program increased from 20 in 1940 to virtually 100 at the end of the decade.

Non-school factors continued to play a role in determining who got to high school. A 1945 survey by the Ontario School Trustees' and Ratepayers' Association showed that home background influenced success at school. High achievers in Grade VIII came predominantly from homes where parents had more education, where books and cultural opportunities were more readily available, and family life more stable. (36)

Yet moving on to high school was no longer a traumatic step for most Ontario teenagers. Both the school system and the larger society had accepted the idea -- and the practice -- that high school admission was attainable for the vast majority of pupils.

Progress Through Secondary School

Once enrolled in secondary school, how did the students of the 1940s fare in their progress through the grades? Table 3.3 (below) demonstrates general progress through the grades

of all students in all publicly-supported secondary schools in Ontario:

TABLE 3.3

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1940-1949
Numbers of Students (37)

Year	Gr IX	Gr X	Gr XI	Gr XII
1940	44847	34126	23594	15795
1941	41162	31242	20033	14326
1942	39913	28976	18272	12523
1943	35337	28014	17421	11701
1944	39367	29837	20460	13606
1945	44297	30525	19944	15813
1946	46060	34261	20986	15197
1947	47030	36664	23125	15912
1948	45433	35930	23236	16518
1949	47112	34935	23062	17153
1940/49 Increase	5%	2%	-2%	8%

Table 3.3 (above) shows minimal changes in the numbers of students in each of the first four years of secondary school during the 1940s. Grade IX enrolments increased 5 per cent during the decade, Grade X just 2 per cent, Grade XI actually decreased 2 per cent, while Grade XII saw the largest increase at 8 per cent.

Table 3.4 (below) demonstrates progress through the secondary school grades in percentages, providing comparisons between the 1940s and previous decades:

TABLE 3.4

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1940-1949
Percentages of Students (38)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

Year	Grade X as % of Grade IX one year earlier	Grade XI as % of Grade X one year earlier	Grade XII as % of Grade XI one year earlier	Grade XII as % of Grade IX three years earlier
1940	77	71	67	37
1941	70	60	61	33
1942	70	60	63	28
1943	70	60	64	26
1944	84	70	78	33
1945	80	67	73	37
1946	77	69	76	43
1947	80	68	76	40
1948	76	64	72	37
1949	77	64	74	37
1920/29	66	69	73	34
1930/39	69	70	67	34
1940/44	74	64	67	31
1945/49	78	66	74	39

Table 3.4 (above) shows declines in retention rates after Grade X during the first half of the decade of the 1940s. Comparing 1940-1944 with 1930-1939, the Grade XI enrolment expressed as a percentage of the previous year's Grade X enrolment declined from 70 to 64, Grade XII as a percentage of the previous year's Grade XI held steady at 67, while Grade XII as a percentage of Grade IX three years earlier declined from 34 to 31.

Table 3.4 (above) also shows increases in retention rates during the second half of the decade. Comparing 1945-1949 with

1940-1944, increases are noted in all four columns; comparing 1945-1949 with the 1920s and 1930s, increases are noted in three of the four columns.

Why did retention rates decline in the early part of the 1940s and rise again in the latter part of the decade?

The Second World War was the major reason for the initial decline, evident as early as the 1939-1940 school year. "As the year advanced," noted the Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools, "attendance declined owing to the enlistment of older pupils and to their absorption into industry." (39)

Between 1940 and 1944, some 12,467 students left Ontario high schools to enlist directly in the armed forces. During the same period, however, more than ten times that number -- a total of 132,244 students -- left for the work force. "New opportunities for profitable employment," concluded Minister of Education Duncan McArthur in 1941, were "offered to senior boys and girls by various industries associated with the Nation's war effort." (40)

Once the war was over, students remained in school. This was not due to post-war job shortages. Indeed, the economy remained buoyant throughout the late 1940s, fueled by immigration, resource development, expanding exports, and strong consumer demand at home. Unemployment figures for Ontario remained extremely low through the 1945-1949 period, with June averages of 0.8 per cent and December averages of 2.4 per cent. (41) At the same

time the Ontario employment index (Base 1926=100) rose from 178 to 205. (42)

Program changes probably had some impact, however minor, on retention rates through the late 1940s. The new curriculum for academic or matriculation students, introduced one year at a time beginning with Grade IX in 1937, was universal throughout the province by the end of the 1940s, and no doubt encouraged more Grade IX students to consider Grade X, more Grade X students to try Grade XI, etc. Diploma changes, also introduced in 1937, may also have made a minor impact. The prospect of receiving an Intermediate Diploma after successful completion of Grade X, or a Secondary School Graduation Diploma for Grade XII, no doubt encouraged more students to remain in school.

Changes in rural secondary education also increased high school attendance and retention rates in the late 1940s. With the end of the Second World War, continuation schools gave way to district high schools throughout the rural Ontario countryside. By 1950 some 123 district high schools served 75 per cent of the southern portion of the province. These were 300-400 pupil institutions, boasting modern facilities, offering a wide range of courses, and serving large population areas through school bus transportation. Educational reformers considered them vastly superior to the limited-scope continuation schools.

Rural students flocked to these new district high schools. Between 1945 and 1950, total rural high school attendance grew

from 27,000 to 38,000 -- a rate of increase more than double that of urban schools -- in a period when Ontario's rural population was actually declining. (43)

Different Rates of Progress Through the Secondary School

The rapid disappearance of continuation schools, together with the Department of Education practice of combining the new district high schools with urban high schools and collegiate institutes for statistical purposes, makes rural/urban comparisons more problematic during the 1940s.

Still, other comparisons are evident. In the 1940s as in previous decades, gender and program differences influenced retention rates. Table 3.5 (below) demonstrates gender differences:

TABLE 3.5

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1940-1949
Gender Differences (44)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

Fourth year secondary school enrolments expressed as percentages of first year secondary school enrolments three years earlier:

	Year	Boys	Girls	
	1940	37	44	
	1941	31	41	
	1942	28	35	
	1943	24	28	
	1944	32	34	
	1945	32	37	
	1946	44	42	
	1947	41	40	
	1948	38	36	
	1949	38	36	
	1925/29	37	31	
	1930/34	34	31	
	1935/39	35	38	
	1940/44	30	36	
	1945/49	39	38	

Table 3.5 (above) indicates that higher retention rates for female students, first noticed in the late 1930s, held through the early 1940s, as the Second World War offered greater enlistment and employment opportunities for boys than for girls. By 1946, however, and through to the end of the decade, the more traditional pattern of higher male retention rates, noticed in the 1920s and early 1930s, reasserted itself. In the late 1940s, boys were more likely to stay longer in high school than girls.

Retention rates between academic and vocational programs also show differences, as revealed in Table 3.6 (below):

TABLE 3.6

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1940-1949
Program Differences (45)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

Fourth year enrolments expressed as a percentage of first year enrolments three years earlier:

	Year	Academic Programs	Vocational Programs	
	1940	55	23	
	1941	50	20	
	1942	43	15	
	1943	31	12	
	1944	47	24	
	1945	53	27	
	1946	58	36	
	1947	55	32	
	1948	50	32	
	1949	50	30	
	1920/29	41	15	
	1930/39	46	16	
	1940/44	45	19	
	1945/49	53	31	

Table 3.6 (above) indicates continuing differences between academic and vocational program retention rates, although differences diminish during the decade. In the 1930s, vocational students had approximately one-third the likelihood of reaching Grade XII as academic students; by the late 1940s, they had a 60 per cent likelihood of reaching Grade XII as academic students.

High School Graduation

Beginning in 1942, the Ontario Department of Education published statistics on the numbers of students awarded the new certificates and diplomas introduced at the end of the previous decade -- the Intermediate Certificate (for successful completion of Grade X) and the Secondary School Graduation Diploma (Grade XII). Table 3.7 (below) shows numbers of Grade XII diplomas in aggregate and proportional terms:

TABLE 3.7

Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diplomas, 1942-1949 (46)

Year	Number Awarded	Number Awarded as % of Grade IX enrolment three years' earlier
1942	10377	23
1943	10354	23
1944	11188	27
1945	12001	30
1946	12122	34
1947	12809	33
1948	13833	31
1949	14265	31

At the beginning of the 1940s, approximately one-quarter of students entering Grade IX of an Ontario high school were likely to graduate from Grade XII three years later with a Secondary School Graduation Diploma. By the end of the decade, the proportion had climbed to approximately one-third.

Conclusions: Retention Rates in the 1940s

The percentage of Grade IX enrolments to Grade VIII enrolments one year earlier rose from 72 during the 1930s to 78 during the 1940s. This increase is attributed to less formal high school entrance requirements and to a new Grade IX core curriculum possessing a wider appeal than previously.

Increases in high school retention rates did not automatically accompany this increase in admissions during the 1940s. During the first half of the decade, retention rates beyond Grade X actually fell; this is attributed to enlistments in the armed forces and employment in wartime industry. Retention rates increased during the second half of the decade; this is attributed to administrative reforms in rural education and to a general societal interest in, and demand for, additional years of schooling.

Retention rates during the 1940s continued to be influenced by gender and by type of program. Retention rates were higher for girls than boys during the first half of the decade, higher for boys than girls during the second half. Retention rates for academic students remained higher than for vocational students throughout the decade, though the difference diminished.

At the beginning of the 1940s, approximately one-quarter of students entering Grade IX of an Ontario high school were likely to graduate from Grade XII three years later; by the end of the decade the proportion had climbed to one-third.

PART IV: THE DECADE OF THE 1950S

Transition From Elementary to Secondary School

With the abolition of the entrance examination in 1949, students now moved directly from Grade VIII to Grade IX (designated as Grade 8, Grade 9, etc. in 1955) on the recommendation of their elementary school principal. Grade 8 and 9 enrolments increased rapidly during the 1950s, as shown in Table 4.1 (below):

TABLE 4.1

Elementary/Secondary School Transition in Ontario, 1950-1959
Numbers of Students (47)

	School Year	Grade 8 Enrolment	Grade 9 Enrolment	
	1949-50	57268	48024	
	1950-51	56265	51655	
	1951-52	58996	52118	
	1952-53	62205	55909	
	1953-54	64680	58805	
	1954-55	68292	61928	
	1955-56	72946	67969	
	1956-57	77707	66354	
	1957-58	79492	72063	
	1958-59	83754	74604	
	% Increase 49/50-58/59	32	36	

Enrolments for 1949-50 to 1955-56 determined by reported school populations for June of the school year; enrolments for 1956-57 to 1958-59 based on September figures.

Grade 8 enrolments increased by 32 per cent during the 1950s, due primarily to rising birth rates during the previous decade. Even this large enrolment jump was exceeded by the 36 per cent increase in Grade 9 enrolments during the 1950s.

Transition from elementary to secondary school can also be considered in percentage terms, as in Table 4.2 (below)

TABLE 4.2

Elementary/Secondary School Transition in Ontario, 1950-1959
Percentages of Students (48)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

School Year	Grade 9 Enrolment as % of Previous Year's Grade 8
1949/50	85
1950/51	90
1951/52	93
1952/53	95
1953/54	94
1954/55	96
1955/56	99
1956/57	91
1957/58	93
1958/59	94
1920-29	60
1930-39	72
1940-49	78
1950-59	93

Grade 9 enrolment expressed as a percentage of Grade 8 enrolment the previous year increased from 85 to 94 during the 1950s. The average of 93 per cent for the decade represents a considerable increase from 78 per cent during the 1940s.

Explaining the Increase in Secondary School Admissions

Why did more Ontario students of the 1950s proceed to high school than ever before?

Certainly the abolition of the entrance examination in 1949, followed by a number of additional innovations within the educational system, eased the transition from elementary to secondary school.

In November 1949 Education Minister Dana Porter announced a revised grade reorganization for Ontario schools. Curriculum would henceforth be grouped in four divisions: primary, from Grades 1 to 3; junior, from 4 to 6; intermediate from 7 to 10; and senior, from 11 to 13. Porter and his departmental officials argued that the intermediate division -- bringing together the upper two years of the elementary school and the lower two years of the secondary school -- would reduce the sharp split between the old child-centred elementary school and the subject-centred high school. (49)

The Department of Education regarded Grades 7 to 10 as a curriculum division only, not requiring administrative unity within a single-purpose school building. Still, local school boards were encouraged to innovate. Some, like Chatham and North York, experimented with junior high schools that bridged the Grade 8/Grade 9 gap. Others established senior public (or senior separate) schools that brought together Grades 7 and 8 on a

full or partial rotary plan, thus helping prepare students for secondary school. And in rural parts of the province, one-room elementary schools were being replaced by multi-classroom central schools. The gap between elementary and secondary school was narrowing, the transition becoming ever easier.

Behind these educational innovations lay an affluent, post-war Ontario society. Beginning in the late 1940s and continuing through the decade of the 1950s, that society forecast a glowing future for its young people. But it would be a more complex future that required skills and training unknown to previous generations. Anyone with just an elementary school education would be left behind. Everyone was expected to proceed on to high school.

Progress Through Secondary School

Once enrolled in secondary school, how did the students of the 1950s fare in their progress through the grades? Table 4.3 (below) demonstrates general progress through the grades of all students in all publicly-supported secondary schools in Ontario:

TABLE 4.3

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1950-1959
Numbers of Students (50)

School Year	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
1949/50	48024	35981	22559	17631
1950/51	51655	37188	23430	16895
1951/52	52118	38866	24208	17725
1952/53	55909	40583	25757	18846
1953/54	58805	43127	26634	20199
1954/55	61928	46000	29165	22096
1955/56	67969	49303	31744	23998
1956/57	66354	48640	32830	25041
1957/58	72063	53654	37177	26769
1958/59	74604	59109	41718	31058
49/50-58/59 Increase	36	64	85	76

Enrolments for 1949-50 to 1955-56 determined by reported school populations for June of the school year; enrolments for 1956-67 to 1958-59 based on September figures.

Table 4.3 (above) shows dramatic increases in the numbers of students in secondary school during the 1950s -- particularly in Grades 10, 11, and 12. The Grade 9 enrolment rise of 36 per cent during the decade was easily surpassed by enrolment jumps in the higher grades -- 64 per cent in Grade 10, 85 per cent in Grade 11, and 76 per cent in Grade 12.

Table 4.4 (below) demonstrates progress through the secondary school grades in percentages, providing comparisons between the 1950s and previous decades:

TABLE 4.4

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1950-1959
Percentages of Students (51)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

School Year	Grade 10 as % of Grade 9 one year earlier	Grade 11 as % of Grade 10 one year earlier	Grade 12 as % of Grade 11 one year earlier	Grade 12 as % of Grade 9 three years earlier
1949/50	76	65	76	38
1950/51	77	65	66	37
1951/52	75	65	76	38
1952/53	78	66	78	40
1953/54	77	66	78	39
1954/55	78	68	83	42
1955/56	80	70	82	43
1956/57	71	67	80	43
1957/58	81	76	82	43
1958/59	82	78	83	46
1920s	66	69	73	34
1930s	69	70	67	34
1940s	76	65	71	35
1950s	78	69	79	41

Table 4.4 (above) shows increases in retention rates for all secondary school grades during the decade. Comparing the 1950s with the 1940s, Grade 10 enrolment as a percentage of Grade 9 enrolment one year earlier increased from 76 to 78, Grade 11 to Grade 10 increased from 65 to 69, Grade 12 to Grade 11 increased from 71 to 79, while Grade 12 to Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier rose from 35 to 41 per cent.

Program innovations had minimal impact on retention rates during the 1950s. The decade saw no major curriculum changes,

and very few minor adjustments. The entire high school experience -- its curriculum, teaching methods, examination pressures, the physical layout of classrooms and hallways -- remained largely unchanged for the majority of Ontario students from the mid-1940s through to the mid-1960s. (52)

Rural Ontario presented an important exception to the generally static secondary school scene of the 1950s. The move to larger, district high schools continued, completely obliterating the old continuation schools by the end of the decade, and rendering the rural high school experience -- except for its elaborate provisions for bus transportation -- much like the urban experience. Department of Education officials frequently cited the expansion of district high schools as a major factor in the overall increase in secondary school attendance and retention rates during the 1950s. (53)

Still, urban attendance growth exceeded rural growth through the 1950s, despite an unchanging curriculum. Fleming cites the "increasing value being placed on education for utilitarian purposes" as a major factor in explaining the increased retention rates. The academic student was faced with increased requirements for admission to the professions; the vocational student encountered the impact of post-war industrialization and advancing technology on occupational skill requirements. Students simply had to stay longer in school to satisfy prospective employers. (54)

Many students, of course, were responding more to intangible

social pressures than to measurable occupational requirements. Teenagers stayed in high school because the high school was the centre of their social and athletic lives. (55)

Different Rates of Progress Through the Secondary School

During the 1950s, gender and program differences became less significant in influencing high school retention rates than in former decades. Table 4.5 (below) demonstrates gender differences:

TABLE 4.5

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1950-1959
Gender Differences (56)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

Grade 12 enrolments expressed as a percentage of Grade 9 enrolments three years earlier:

	School Year	Boys	Girls	
	1949/50	38	37	
	1950/51	38	37	
	1951/52	37	38	
	1952/53	39	40	
	1953/54	39	40	
	1954/55	42	42	
	1955/56	43	43	
	1956/57	43	42	
	1957/58	43	43	
	1958/59	46	45	
	1920s	37	31	
	1930s	35	35	
	1940s	35	37	
	1950s	41	41	

Table 4.5 (above) indicates the declining influence of gender as a factor influencing retention rates in the 1950s. Through the ten years of the decade, four years saw boys with a slightly higher retention rate than girls, three years saw girls slightly ahead of boys, and three years saw similar rates. For the entire decade of the 1950s, male and female pupils registered similar retention rates of 41 per cent.

The gap between academic and vocational program students also narrowed during the 1950s, as shown in Table 4.6 (below):

TABLE 4.6

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1950-1959
Program Differences (57)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

Grade 12 enrolments expressed as a percentage of Grade 9 enrolments three years earlier:

	School Year	Academic Program	Vocational Program	
	1949/50	52	31	
	1950/51	48	33	
	1951/52	48	32	
	1952/53	47	33	
	1953/54	47	34	
	1954/55	47	54	
	1955/56	50	50	
	1956/57	49	51	
	1957/58	43	46	
	1958/59	48	44	
	1920s	41	15	
	1930s	46	16	
	1940s	49	25	
	Early 1950s	48	33	
	Late 1950s	47	49	

Table 4.6 (above) demonstrates a slight decrease in retention rates for students in the academic or matriculation program during the 1950s, accompanied by a dramatic increase in retention rates for students in various vocational programs (technical education, commercial education, etc.), particularly in the second half of the decade.

Part of the increase in vocational education rates is explained by changes in the way student numbers were tabulated by the Department of Education. Earlier, students in short-term special industrial programs had been included in tallies of vocational students; during the 1950s they were excluded, producing more favourable rates for students in four-year programs.

Still, other, more significant factors were at work. First, the more casual or marginal students of the 1950s were more likely to try to struggle through the traditional academic program than to attempt one of the vocational programs. The slow, almost non-existent, expansion of vocational education facilities during the 1950s created a shortage of places for interested students; vocational programs could thus choose the better applicants, leaving poorer applicants for the academic program.

By the end of the 1950s, the vocational student in a four-year program was about as likely to reach Grade 12 as his or her academic counterpart.

Regardless of gender or program, some students dropped out of school while others stayed. A study of 2492 drop-outs

from Toronto secondary schools during 1952-53 cited several reasons for dropping out, in the following order of importance:

* lack of application
* reached limit of ability
* desired employment
* financial need
* unsettled home conditions
* non co-operation
* no home encouragement or control
* personal health
* family health

The first three factors, in identical order of importance, were cited for drop-outs from both the collegiate institutes and the technical schools. Some difference was noted, however, in drop-outs from Toronto's high schools of commerce, where the first three factors cited were: financial need, desired employment, lack of application. (58)

High School Graduation

Table 4.7 (below) shows numbers of Grade 12 diplomas awarded in aggregate and proportional terms:

TABLE 4.7

Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diplomas, 1950-1959 (59)

(Showing Comparison With Previous Decade)

	Year	Number Awarded	Number Awarded as % of Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier	
	1950	15079	32	
	1951	15390	34	
	1952	16835	36	
	1953	17363	36	
	1954	18567	36	
	1955	19342	37	
	1956	20451	37	
	1957	22282	38	
	1958	23910	39	
	1959	27535	40	
	1940s		29	
	1950s		37	

The number of students receiving Secondary School Graduation Diplomas for successful completion of Grade 12 continued to increase through the 1950s. At the beginning of the decade, approximately one-third of students entering Grade 9 of an Ontario high school were likely to graduate from Grade 12 three years later; at the end of the decade the proportion had risen to about two-fifths. Comparing the entire decade of the 1950s with the 1940s, the proportion had increased to 37 from 29 per cent.

Conclusions: Retention Rates in the 1950s

The percentage of Grade 9 enrolments to Grade 8 enrolments one year earlier rose from 78 during the 1940s to 93 during

the 1950s. This increase is attributed to examination and program changes initiated by the Department of Education that significantly eased student transition from elementary to secondary school.

Increases in high school retention rates accompanied this increase in high school admissions. Grade 10 enrolment as a percentage of Grade 9 one year earlier increased from 76 per cent in the 1940s to 78 per cent in the 1950s; Grade 11 to Grade 10 one year earlier increased from 65 to 69; Grade 12 to Grade 11 from 71 to 79. Finally, Grade 12 enrolment to Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier increased from 35 to 41 per cent, while Grade 12 graduates to Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier jumped from 29 to 37 per cent.

Increased retention rates during the 1950s are attributed to the continuing spread of district high schools throughout rural Ontario, plus rising utilitarian and social reasons for staying in school.

Retention rates during the 1950s were less influenced by by gender and by type of program than in previous decades. By the end of the 1950s, girls and boys showed similar Grade 9 to Grade 12 retention rates of 41 per cent. At the same time students in four-year vocational programs were about as likely to reach Grade 12 as their counterparts in academic programs.

Despite increases in retention rates, many students continued to drop out of secondary school before reaching Grade 12 or before acquiring a graduation diploma. A Toronto study early

in the decade identified the three major reasons for dropping out as: lack of application, reached limit of ability, desired employment.

An interprovincial study later in the decade showed Ontario's retention rates consistently lagging behind those of Alberta and British Columbia; the same study showed Ontario behind those two western provinces in terms of educational expenditures per capita, and educational expenditures per pupil in average daily attendance. (60)

PART V: THE DECADE OF THE 1960S

Transition From Elementary to Secondary School

Grade 8 and 9 enrolments continued to increase during the 1960s, as shown in Table 5.1 (below):

TABLE 5.1

Elementary/Secondary School Transition in Ontario, 1960-1969
Numbers of Students (61)

	School Year	Grade 8 Enrolment	Grade 9 Enrolment	
	1959/60	97912	76598	
	1960/61	108261	88607	
	1961/62	110487	100988	
	1962/63	113414	103866	
	1963/64	114751	103526	
	1964/65	118523	105899	
	1965/66	124476	110977	
	1966/67	130126	117582	
	1967/68	135333	124067	
	1968/69	138862	131082	
	% Increase 59/60-68/69	42	71	

Enrolments for each school year based on September figures.

Grade 8 enrolments increased by 42 per cent during the 1960s, as rising birth rates and immigration rates of the post-war era contributed to a general increase in provincial population. Yet even this large enrolment jump was exceeded by the 71 per cent

increase in Grade 9 enrolments during the 1960s.

Transition from elementary school can also be considered in percentage terms, as in Table 5.2 below:

TABLE 5.2

Elementary/Secondary School Transition in Ontario, 1960-1969
Percentages of Students (62)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

	School Year	Grade 9 Enrolment as % of Previous Year's Grade 8
	1959/60	92
	1960/61	90
	1961/62	93
	1962/63	94
	1963/64	91
	1964/65	92
	1965/66	94
	1966/67	94
	1967/68	95
	1968/69	97
	1920s	60
	1930s	72
	1940s	78
	1950s	93
	1960s	93

Grade 9 enrolment expressed as a percentage of Grade 8 enrolment the previous year varied from 92 to 97 during the 1960s. The average of 93 per cent for the decade was the same as the average for the previous decade.

Several changes in the educational system during the 1960s contributed to the steady flow of students from elementary to

secondary school. In rural areas, multi-classroom central schools replaced one-room and two-room country schoolhouses, thus reducing instructional differences between elementary and secondary schools. Centralization of administration accompanied this centralization of instruction, with the legislated creation of township public school boards in 1965 and county boards of education in 1969, thus bringing elementary and secondary education under common local administrative bodies. Finally, additional students decided to try Grade 9 because of the establishment of the Reorganized Program of Studies explained below.

Progress Through Secondary School

Once enrolled in secondary school, how did the students of the 1960s fare in their progress through the grades? Table 5.3 (below) demonstrates general progress through the grades of all students in all publicly-supported secondary schools in Ontario:

TABLE 5.3

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1960-1969
Numbers of Students (63)

School Year	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
1959/60	76598	60829	45552	34792
1960/61	88607	64783	47833	38697
1961/62	100988	76290	52681	42266
1962/63	103866	86012	61733	46776
1963/64	103526	90817	70302	55731
1964/65	105899	93453	77922	64418
1965/66	110997	96299	80710	67282
1966/67	117582	100710	83963	70625
1967/68	124067	108789	88988	75214
1968/69	131082	117425	98585	82371
59/60-68/69 Increase	71%	93%	117%	137%

Enrolments for each school year based on September figures.

Table 5.3 (above) shows dramatic increases in the numbers of students in secondary school during the 1960s, with each grade's increase being surpassed by that of the next highest grade. While Grade 9 enrolments increased 71 per cent, Grade 10 almost doubled with a 93 per cent increase, Grade 11 more than doubled with a 117 per cent jump, and Grade 12 leaped 137 per cent.

Table 5.4 (below) demonstrates progress through the secondary school grades in percentages, providing comparisons between the 1960s and previous decades:

TABLE 5.4

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1960-1969
Percentages of Students (64)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

School Year	Grade 10 as % of Grade 9 one year earlier	Grade 11 as % of Grade 10 one year earlier	Grade 12 as % of Grade 11 one year earlier	Grade 12 as % of Grade 9 three years earlier
1959/60	82	77	83	53
1960/61	84	79	85	54
1961/62	85	81	88	57
1962/63	85	81	83	61
1963/64	87	82	90	63
1964/65	90	86	92	64
1965/66	91	86	86	65
1966/67	92	87	88	70
1967/68	93	88	90	71
1968/69	95	91	93	74
1920s	66	69	73	34
1930s	69	70	67	34
1940s	76	65	71	35
1950s	78	69	79	41
1960s	88	84	88	63

Table 5.4 (above) shows increases in retention rates for all secondary school grades during the decade. Comparing the 1960s with the 1950s, Grade 10 enrolments as a percentage of Grade 9 enrolments one year earlier increased from 78 to 88, Grade 11 to Grade 10 increased from 69 to 84, Grade 12 to Grade 11 increased from 79 to 88, while Grade 12 to Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier rose from 41 to 63 per cent.

These increases in retention rate are attributed in large measure to program innovations of the 1960s. First came Ottawa's

Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act of 1960, a federal-provincial shared-cost venture in vocational education. The aim was to expand and upgrade vocational training at a time of high unemployment among the unskilled, and rising occupational requirements in the secondary manufacturing, trade, and service sectors of the economy.

Under the new Act, the federal and provincial governments split, on a 75/25 per cent basis, the costs of constructing new vocational high schools or vocational components of composite high schools. In the first year of the agreement alone, 124 new vocational or composite high schools were approved for Ontario, as well as fifty-two major additions to existing schools, at a total estimated cost of $230 million. By the time of the Act's expiry in 1967, 335 new school facilities and eighty-three additions added up to $806 million, providing 235,000 new vocational pupil places. (65)

Accompanying this federal initiative was the Ontario Department of Education's introduction in 1962 of the Reorganized Program of Studies. This called for three equal-status branches within secondary education -- Arts and Science (the former general or academic course); Business and Commerce; and Science, Technology and Trades. In all three branches, students would be streamed after Grade 9 into five-year academically-oriented programs leading to university, four-year programs leading to skilled employment after Grade 12, or two-year occupational programs

to prepare for service industries. Wherever populations permitted, high schools would become fully composite and offer the entire range of programs, thus making a greater variety of opportunities available to more students than ever before.

"A principal purpose of the reorganization," stated Minister of Education John Robarts, "is to retain in school until at least the end of the Grade 12 year a much higher proportion of pupils who enrol in Grade 9." (66) Such pupil retention was imperative in the increasingly complex decade of the 1960s, Robarts argued, to ensure "their better preparation for the duties of citizenship and the particular vocations upon which they will enter". It would result in the production "not only of abler individuals but of more useful citizens". (67)

The Reorganized Program did succeed in boosting retention rates and diversifying the high school program. Between 1960 and 1969 the secondary school enrolment as a proportion of the fifteen-to-nineteen-year age group increased from 62 to 77 per cent. And proportionately more of these students enrolled in the "non-academic" branches. Science, Technology and Trades jumped from 15 to 21 per cent of the total student population between 1963 and 1969, Business and Commerce from 20 to 22, while Arts and Science slipped from 65 to 57 per cent. (68)

Different Rates of Progress Through the Secondary School

During the 1960s, gender and program differences became more significant in influencing high school retention rates than in the previous decade of the 1950s. Table 5.5 (below) demonstrates gender differences:

TABLE 5.5

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1960-1969
Gender Differences (69)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

Grade 12 enrolments expressed as a percentage of Grade 9 enrolments three years earlier:

	School Year	Boys	Girls	
	1959/60	53	53	
	1960/61	54	54	
	1961/62	57	57	
	1962/63	62	60	
	1963/64	64	62	
	1964/65	65	63	
	1965/66	67	63	
	1966/67	70	70	
	1967/68	72	70	
	1968/69	75	74	
	1920s	37	31	
	1930s	35	35	
	1940s	35	37	
	1950s	41	41	
	1960s	64	63	

Table 5.5 (above) demonstrates the resurgence of gender as a factor influencing retention rates during the 1960s. While

the pattern of similar male/female retention rates established during the 1950s continued through the early years of the 1960s, by mid-decade male retention rates were once again higher than female retention rates.

The 1960s also saw changes in the way program choice influenced high school retention rates. This is shown in Table 5.6 (below):

TABLE 5.6

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1960-1969
Program Differences (70)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

Grade 12 enrolments expressed as a percentage of Grade 9 enrolments three years earlier:

	School Year	Academic Programs	Vocational Programs	
	1959/60	50	53	
	1960/61	53	57	
	1961/62	56	58	
	1962/63	60	67	
	1963/64	63	69	
	1964/65	61	73	
	1965/66	70	58	
	1966/67	80	55	
	1967/68	81	60	
	1968/69	86	61	
	1920s	41	15	
	1930s	46	16	
	1940s	49	25	
	1950s	48	41	
	Early 1960s	56	61	
	Late 1960s	76	61	

Table 5.6 (above) indicates dramatic increases in retention rates for students in academic programs (Arts and Science Branch from 1962/63 on) -- from 50 per cent in 1959/60 to 86 per cent in 1968/69, or from an average of 56 per cent in the first half of the decade to 76 per cent in the second half. Meanwhile, after reaching a peak of 73 per cent in 1964/65, retention rates for students in vocational programs (Business and Commerce Branch and Science, Technology and Trades Branch from 1962/63) declined in the latter half of the decade.

At the beginning of the decade, Grade 9 vocational students had a better chance of reaching Grade 12 three years later than did their academic counterparts; at the end of the decade the situation had reversed.

The explanation for this reversal lies primarily in the supply of vocational education places. At the beginning of the 1960s, marginal students filled seats in academic programs because of an acute shortage of vocational education facilities. At the end of the decade they filled the thousands of new seats in vocational programs made available through the federal government's Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act of 1960 and the provincial government's Reorganized Program of Studies introduced in 1962.

High School Graduation

Table 5.7 (below) shows numbers of Grade 12 diplomas awarded in aggregate and proportional terms:

TABLE 5.7

Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diplomas, 1960-1969 (71)

(Showing Comparison With Previous Decades)

	Year	Number Awarded	Number Awarded as % of Grade 9 Enrolment Three Years Earlier
	1960	30287	46
	1961	31243	43
	1962	34290	46
	1963	38123	50
	1964	46405	52
	1965	55516	55
	1966	62530	60
	1967	66198	64
	1968	72536	69
	1969	77657	70
	1940s		29
	1950s		37
	1960s		56

The number of students awarded Secondary School Graduation Diplomas continued to increase through the 1960s. At the beginning of the decade, the number awarded was 46 per cent of the Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier; at the end of the decade the percentage rose to 70. The average for 1960s as a whole stood at 56 per cent, compared with 37 per cent for the previous decade.

Yet program differences remained significant; the diploma rate for academic students continued to exceed that of vocational students -- 46 to 37 per cent at the beginning of the decade, and 80 to 52 per cent at the end of the decade.

Conclusions: Retention Rates in the 1960s

The proportion of Grade 9 enrolments to Grade 8 enrolments one year earlier averaged 93 per cent during the decade of the 1960s, the same percentage as recorded in the 1950s. The steady flow of students moving on to secondary school is attributed to changes in instructional patterns and administrative organization in rural elementary schools, plus the attractions of the new Reorganized Program of Studies in the high schools.

Dramatic increases in high school retention rates were recorded during the 1960s. Grade 10 enrolment as a percentage of Grade 9 enrolment one year earlier increased from an average of 78 per cent in the 1950s to 88 per cent in the 1960s; Grade 11 to Grade 10 one year earlier increased from 69 to 84; Grade 12 to Grade 11 from 79 to 88. Finally, Grade 12 enrolment to Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier increased from 41 to 63 per cent, while Grade 12 graduates to Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier jumped from 37 to 56 per cent.

Increased retention rates during the 1960s are attributed to the diversification of secondary school programs as a result

of the federal government's Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act of 1960 and the Ontario Department of Education's Reorganized Program of Studies of 1962.

Retention rates during the 1960s were more influenced by gender and by type of program than in the 1960s. Though similar retention rates prevailed for male and female pupils at the beginning of the decade, the second half of the decade showed higher rates for boys than for girls. Retention rates were more favourable for vocational students than for academic students in the first half of the decade; by the late 1960s this situation had dramatically reversed.

PART VI: THE DECADE OF THE 1970S

Introduction

Pragmatic and policy reasons combine to dictate the 1972/73 school year as the appropriate termination for this study of secondary school program innovations and student retention rates.

On a practical level, 1972/73 is the last year in which the Ontario Ministry of Education generated secondary school enrolment statistics on the basis of grade levels. The full introduction of the credit system in Ontario high schools that year officially ended the traditional grade-level designations for students, making it impossible from that point on, to calculate gross retention rates on the basis of a given grade's student population expressed as a percentage of the previous grade's population one year earlier. Indeed, one part of the study -- transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9 -- has to be concluded at the beginning of the decade, due to the ministry's interim methods used for calculating students in the years of partial introduction of the credit system -- from 1969/70 through 1971/72.

On a policy level, 1972/73 is the first year of the Cicely Watson series of focused studies on secondary school drop-outs. That year Watson and Sharon Burnham combined on a pilot study of

drop-outs from thirteen school systems. (72) That initial study led to Watson and Sharon McElroy's comprehensive study of Ontario secondary school drop-outs in 1974/75. (73) This historical study ends, therefore, where the Watson studies begin.

Progress Through Secondary School

Table 6.1 (below) demonstrates general progress through the grades of all students in all publicly-supported secondary schools in Ontario through the early 1970s:

TABLE 6.1

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1970-1973
Numbers of Students (74)

School Year	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
1969/70	135420	122181	105836	90956
1970/71	153826	139961	116116	98837
1971/72	157433	141939	121750	101733
1972/73	162781	143459	125417	100644
69/70-72/73 Increase	20%	17%	18%	11%

Enrolments for each school year based on September figures.

Table 6.1 (above) shows modest increases in grade level enrolments in the early 1970s, with the highest percentage increase coming at the Grade 9 level and the lowest at the Grade 12 level.

Table 6.2 (below) demonstrates progress through the secondary school grades in percentages, providing comparisons between the early 1970s and previous decades:

TABLE 6.2

Progress Through Secondary School in Ontario, 1970-1973 Percentages of Students (75)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

School Year	Grade 10 as % of Grade 9 one year earlier	Grade 11 as % of Grade 10 one year earlier	Grade 12 as % of Grade 11 one year earlier	Grade 12 as % of Grade 9 three years earlier
1969/70	94	90	92	77
1970/71	104	95	93	80
1971/72	93	97	88	77
1972/73	91	88	82	75
1920s	66	69	73	34
1930s	69	70	67	34
1940s	76	65	71	35
1950s	78	69	79	41
1960s	88	84	88	63
1970s	96	93	89	77

Table 6.1 (above) shows increases in retention rates for all secondary school grades during the early 1970s. Comparing these years with the 1960s, Grade 10 enrolments as a percentage of Grade 9 enrolments one year earlier increased from 88 to 96, Grade 11 to Grade 10 increased from 84 to 93, Grade 12 to Grade 11 increased from 88 to 89, while Grade 12 to Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier rose from 63 to 77 per cent. By

the early 1970s, an average of three-quarters of all students beginning Grade 9 reached Grade 12 three years later.

These increases in gross retention rates are partially attributed to three developments of the late 1960s which began to influence enrolments in the early 1970s.

The first of these innovations saw the credit system replace the Reorganized Program of Studies as the basic curriculum organization for secondary schools. A "credit" was now awarded for successful completion of work in a subject extending over five periods a week through the school year. The Grade 12 diploma required twenty-seven credits; thirteen were compulsory and at least six had to be completed at "level four" standing. Grade 13 was defined as seven additional credits at "level five".

The credit system grew out of experimental programs introduced in six high schools in September 1967. Within three years more than half the province's secondary schools had switched to the new program; by September 1972 every school in the province had converted. The credit system broke down the barriers among the various branches and programs of the Reorganized Program, introducing individual timetables, subject promotion rather than grade promotion, and a variety of optional courses.

The credit system brought greater freedom and increased self-responsibility to both teachers and students in the high schools. Teachers now had more flexibility in curriculum design and teaching style. Students had greater choice among individual

courses and course sequencing. "Subject promotion," stated Minister of Education Robert Welch in 1971, "permits a student to progress in the subjects for which he has ability at a faster rate than he might in those subjects that have less interest for him but which, nevertheless, he may still wish to pursue to attain his goal in life." (76)

While the Reorganized Program and its vocational orientation suited a traditional generation of Ontario teenagers coming of age in the early 1960s, the more open-ended credit system seemed more in tune with the libertarian spirit of the late 1960s and early 1970s. "The feeling of freedom that was felt in the high schools was perhaps the most significant factor," reported one principal. "There arose a willingness to innovate with respect to the total program." (77) During a period when young people demanded freedom, the credit system gave them greater opportunities to shape their own high school programs than ever before. No doubt it encouraged many to remain longer in school.

The establishment of French-language secondary schools was a second development of the late 1960s that contributed to increased retention rates through the 1970s. Previously, French-speaking students had fared poorly in the Anglophone milieu of Ontario high schools. Only 38 per cent of French-speaking students who entered Grade 9 in 1959, for example, reached Grade 11 two years later, compared with 52 per cent of English-speaking pupils. "No matter how the data were analysed," reported the

Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1968, "we were led to the same conclusion -- that the attrition rate from Francophone homes is disastrously high." (78)

Legislation was introduced in May 1968 allowing the establishment of French-language high schools within public education systems. "Every French-speaking student in the province," announced Education Minister William Davis, would now have "the opportunity to receive his education from kindergarten through university in the language of his choice." (79) The legislation outlined three possibilities: unilingual French schools; schools housing both English- and French-language sections; or simply classes with certain subjects taught in French. By 1971, French-language public high schools enrolled 28,000 students. (80)

The creation of county boards of education was a third development of the late 1960s that influenced -- however indirectly -- secondary school retention rates of the 1970s. Created in 1969, the new county boards brought elementary and secondary schools under one jurisdiction in rural areas. The closing of smaller high schools quickly became a priority for many of these new boards. Such schools, with their limited curricular offerings, were no longer considered viable; larger, full-option schools -- in rural as well as urban areas -- were deemed essential for encouraging students to remain longer in high school. (81)

Different Rates of Progress Through the Secondary School

The introduction of the credit system between 1967 and 1972 led to the end of the Ministry of Education's practice of computing separate enrolment statistics for students in academic programs (Arts and Science) and those in vocational programs (Business and Commerce; Science, Technology and Trades). Some students are classified under the heading "Experimental and Innovative Programs" as early as the 1968/69 school year; by 1970/71 they are the majority. Beginning in 1971/72, high school enrolment statistics indicate no program differentiation.

Gender differences, however, continue to be noted until 1972/73. Table 6.3 (below) demonstrates the influence of gender on secondary school retention rates in the early 1970s:

TABLE 6.3

Progress Through Secondary Education in Ontario, 1970-1973
Gender Differences (82)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

Grade 12 enrolments expressed as a percentage of Grade 9 enrolments three years earlier:

	School Year	Boys	Girls	
	1969/70	77	78	
	1970/71	79	77	
	1971/72	77	79	
	1972/73	74	75	
	1920s	37	31	
	1930s	35	35	
	1940s	35	37	
	1950s	41	41	
	1960s	64	63	
	1970s	77	77	

Table 6.1 (above) demonstrates the declining influence of gender on retention rates in the early 1970s. Girls show slightly higher retention rates in three of the four years; boys lead slightly in the fourth year. Average retention rates for both male and female pupils are similar for the period.

High School Graduation

Table 6.4 (below) shows numbers of Grade 12 diplomas awarded in aggregate and proportional terms:

TABLE 6.4

Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diplomas, 1970-1976 (83)

(Showing Comparisons With Previous Decades)

	Year	Number Awarded	Number Awarded as % of Grade 9 Enrolment Three Years Earlier	
	1970	75244	64	
	1971	80701	65	
	1972	83673	64	
	1973	91705	68	
	1974	91851	60	
	1975	94255	60	
	1976	98369	60	
	1940s		29	
	1950s		37	
	1960s		56	
	1970s		63	

The number of students awarded Secondary School Graduation Diplomas continued to increase in numbers through the early and mid-1970s. Proportionately, the percentage rises from an average of 56 in the 1960s to 63 in the 1970s. However, after reaching peaks of 69 per cent in 1968 and 70 per cent in 1969, the proportion of diploma recipients to Grade 9 students three years previously declined during the early and middle years of the 1970s. The explanation for the decline lies in the transition from the Reorganized Program to the credit system, as many students over a four-year period of attendance fell one or two credits short of the twenty-seven required for the diploma. By the mid-1970s, some three-fifths of Grade 9 enrolees could expect a Grade 12 diploma three years later.

The remaining two-fifths dropped out of high school before attaining a Grade 12 graduation diploma. The Watson studies of the mid-1970s indicate both "school-related' and "non-school related" reasons for leaving school, though the latter seem paramount. The most frequently cited reasons for leaving school among respondents in Watson and McElroy´s 1974/75 study were: first, "left school to take a job;" and, second "left school because they needed money and had the chance of a job." (84)

Conclusion: Retention Rates in the 1970s

Increases in high school retention rates were recorded during the early 1970s. Grade 10 enrolment as a percentage of Grade 9 enrolment one year earlier increased from an average of 88 per cent in the 1960s to 96 per cent in the early 1970s; Grade 11 to Grade 10 one year earlier increased from 84 to 93; Grade 12 to Grade 11 from 88 to 89. Finally, Grade 12 enrolment to Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier rose from an average of 63 per cent during the 1960s to an average of 77 per cent during the early 1970s.

Increased secondary school retention rates during the early 1970s are attributed in part to three factors: the introduction of the credit system; the establishment of French-language high schools within the public education system; and the closing of many limited-program rural secondary schools by the new county boards of education.

Retention rates were less influenced by gender than during the previous decade; rates for male and female pupils were similar through the early 1970s.

Three-fifths of students entering Grade 9 could expect to receive a Secondary School Graduation Diploma three years later. The remaining two-fifths dropped out of school for a variety of reasons, the chief ones being to "take a job" or the "chance of a job".

CONCLUSIONS

High School Admission Rates

The fifty-year period from the early 1920s to the early 1970s witnessed steady increases in high school admission rates within the publicly-supported secondary education system in the province of Ontario. These increases are attributed both to program changes within the educational system and to societal factors external to that system.

During the 1920s, for example, the proportion of first year high school (Grade 9) enrolments to final year elementary school enrolments (Grade 8) one year earlier increased from an average of 52 per cent in the first half of the decade to an average of 68 per cent in the second half. This rise is attributed to several factors: increase in compulsory school attendance age from fourteen to sixteen; abolition of all remaining high school tuition fees; spread of secondary education through rural Ontario; increase in vocational educational programs; and the belief that elementary education alone was no longer sufficient to prepare students for the social and economic realities of the post-First World War period.

During the 1930s, the proportion of first year high school enrolments to final year elementary school enrolments one year

earlier averaged 72 per cent. This increase over the previous decade is attributed both to the economic depression of the period and to such program changes as the easing of high school entrance requirements and revisions to the Grade 9 curriculum.

During the 1940s, the proportion of first year high school enrolments to final year elementary school enrolments one year earlier increased to an average of 78 per cent; this increase is attributed to the continued easing of high school entrance requirements. By the 1950s and 1960s the proportion reached an average of 93 per cent; this is attributed to the final abolition of the entrance examination.

High School Retention Rates

The half century between the early 1920s and the early 1970s also witnessed -- with the exception of the early 1930s and the early 1940s -- parallel increases in high school retention rates. Again, these increases are attributed both to program changes within the educational system and to societal factors external to that system.

During the 1920s, for example, retention rates increased much less dramatically than admission rates. The percentage of fourth year (Grade 12) enrolments to first year (Grade 9) enrolments three years previously rose from an average of 33 during the first half of the decade to just 34 during the second

half. Minor changes in the Ontario secondary school curriculum at the beginning of the 1920s had minimum impact on retention rates.

During the 1930s, retention rates fell during the beginning of the decade, then increased at the end. During the second half of the 1930s, the proportion of fourth year enrolments to first year enrolments three years previously rose to an average of 37 per cent. This increase is attributed more to the economic depression of the period than to changes in the secondary school program.

Again during the 1940s, retention rates fell during the first half of the decade -- a result of armed services enlistment and war-generated industrial work -- and increased during the second half. By the end of the 1940s, the proportion of fourth year enrolments to first year enrolments three years earlier reached an average of 39 per cent, while the proportion of Grade 12 diploma recipients to Grade 9 enrolees three years previously averaged 33 per cent. Increased retention rates in the late 1940s are attributed to improved high school facilities in rural Ontario and rising educational expectations in post-war Canada.

Retention rates showed steady increases during the 1950s. The proportion of Grade 12 enrolments to Grade 9 enrolments three years earlier averaged 41 per cent, while Grade 12 diploma recipients to Grade 9 enrolees three years previously averaged 37 per cent. These rates climbed during a decade of minimum program changes

in the high schools; increases are attributed to rising societal and economic expectations.

Steady increases in retention rates were again recorded in the 1960s. The proportion of Grade 12 enrolments to Grade 9 enrolments three years earlier averaged 63 per cent, while Grade 12 diploma recipients to Grade 9 enrolees three years previously averaged 56 per cent. These increases are attributed to high school program changes brought about by the federal government's Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act and the provincial Department of Education's Reorganized Program of Studies.

During the early 1970s the proportion of Grade 12 enrolments to Grade 9 enrolments three years earlier rose to an average of 77 per cent, while Grade 12 diploma recipients to Grade 9 enrolees three years previously averaged 63 per cent. These increases are attributed to the introduction of the "credit" system, the establishment of French-language secondary schools, and further improvements in rural education.

Gender, Location, and Program Differences in Retention Rates

The period from the 1920s to the 1970s produced shifting patterns in retention rate comparisons along male/female, urban/rural, and academic program/vocational program lines.

During the 1920s, for example, retention rates were higher for boys than for girls; this is attributed to male-oriented school programs, traditional societal expectations, and job availability. The 1930s saw this situation reversed; while boys continued to show higher retention rates than girls during the first half of the decade, girls did much better during the second half. Shifts are again evident during the 1940s, with girls showing higher retention rates than boys during the first half of the decade -- the war being the major factor -- and boys doing better during the second half. By the 1950s, differences disappeared and similar average retention rates were recorded for male and female pupils, as prejudices against "higher education" for girls began to diminish. These similar male/female retention rates generally held steady through the 1960s and 1970s.

During the 1920s, retention rates were higher in urban academic schools (collegiate institutes and high schools) than in rural academic schools (continuation schools); this is attributed to superior facilities within urban schools, and to differences in community acceptance of secondary education. Rural schools showed some superiority during the first half of the 1930s, then slipped behind again in the second half. With the disappearance of continuation schools in the 1940s and 1950s, urban-rural comparisons became more difficult to draw.

During the 1920s, retention rates were three to four times higher in academic programs than in vocational programs such

as technical education or commercial education; this is attributed to the newness of vocational education and to job availability for vocational program drop-outs. During the 1930s, with jobs less available for vocational program drop-outs, the gap in retention rates narrowed somewhat, though academic students were two and a half times more likely to reach fourth year than their vocational counterparts. The gap continued to narrow during the 1940s; by the end of the decade vocational students had a 60 per cent likelihood of reaching Grade 12 as academic students. By the late 1950s, retention rates were higher in vocational programs than in academic programs; this is attributed to a more rigorous selection of students for vocational programs caused by a shortage of student places in those programs. The decade of the 1960s saw traditional patterns reassert themselves, with retention rates higher for academic students than for vocational students; this is attributed to the Reorganized Program of Studies. By the 1970s academic and vocational students are merged in the credit system, and retention rate differences cannot be traced.

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